

Why are the package insert ranges too wide? To begin with they have been produced under foreign conditions, as every company supplying such material will have imported it from either Europe or the USA. Secondly, think on the system used by commercial companies to produce those ranges. They will have been established by the control material being sent to a number of labs for testing. The range thus has errors associated with between-lab variation, rather than simply in-lab variation, which is what you need for internal QC ranges.

The issue is that you **MUST** use your own SD ranges to operate your own QC system. You **MUST** know when your QC results are outside your own SD range, to decide on what action you need to take. If you still worry about this, wait until you get to a later module. It will be explained in greater detail in Module 4.

Please repeat my patient samples

An anxious doctor phones to ask you to repeat his patient sample tests. The first set of results was as follows:

TEST	FIRST RESULT	REPEAT
Sodium	140	
Creatinine	140	
Cross-match	AB negative	
HIV	Positive	
Haemoglobin	14.5	
Sputum	TB scanty	

Now, in the column headed REPEAT write in the results which you would be happy with as being “the same” i.e. statistically not significantly different from the first result. The results you write in can be either above or below the first set of results. That does not matter. What does is that they are your opinion of what constitutes the same result – and please do not necessarily write in exactly the same value, unless you strongly feel that no other result would be acceptable clinically. In an ideal world labs would always get the same answer, but we live in a very real path lab world. So get realistic and write in what would make you happy with the first set of results. And do that now, BEFORE continuing with this module, before reading the next paragraph.

Right, assuming you have filled in the last column, let’s discuss what you wrote. Chances are that you would accept a repeat sodium result from about 137-143 as being “the same” as the first result. With creatinine a range from about 132-148 would be OK as repeats, while Hb would probably be acceptable from 14.0-15.0. The scanty TB result would need to be scanty or 1+ to substantiate the first result, with a negative repeat result not

S A N A S

